

Solution-Based Counseling for Slow Learners Children in Facing Learning Difficulties in Inclusive Schools

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Abstrack

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) in addressing learning difficulties experienced by slow learners in inclusive schools. Using a quantitative experimental design with a pretest-posttest control group, the research involved students identified as slow learners at State Junior High School 4, Magetan. The experimental group received group counseling using the SFBC approach for eight sessions. Data were collected through learning difficulty scales, observations, documentation, and interviews. ANCOVA analysis showed a significant improvement in students' learning abilities after receiving SFBC counseling. The approach helped students recognize their strengths, increase motivation, and develop coping strategies for academic challenges. Findings confirmed that SFBC is effective in enhancing the confidence, concentration, comprehension, and future orientation of slow learners. The integration of this counseling approach contributes to inclusive education by offering a constructive, strength-based intervention model.

Keywords: solution-focused brief counseling, slow learners, learning difficulties, inclusive education, group counseling

Abstract

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji efektivitas Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) dalam mengatasi kesulitan belajar yang dialami oleh pembelajar lambat di sekolah inklusif. Dengan menggunakan desain eksperimental kuantitatif dengan kelompok kontrol pretest-posttest, penelitian melibatkan siswa yang diidentifikasi sebagai pembelajar lambat di SMP Negeri 4 Magetan. Kelompok eksperimental menerima konseling kelompok menggunakan pendekatan SFBC selama delapan sesi. Data dikumpulkan melalui skala kesulitan belajar, observasi, dokumentasi, dan wawancara. Analisis ANCOVA menunjukkan peningkatan kemampuan belajar siswa yang signifikan setelah menerima konseling SFBC. Pendekatan ini membantu siswa mengenali kekuatan mereka, meningkatkan motivasi, dan mengembangkan strategi koping untuk tantangan akademik. Temuan menegaskan bahwa SFBC efektif dalam meningkatkan kepercayaan diri, konsentrasi, pemahaman, dan orientasi masa depan pembelajar lambat. Integrasi pendekatan konseling ini berkontribusi pada pendidikan inklusif dengan menawarkan model intervensi berbasis kekuatan yang konstruktif.

Kata kunci: konseling singkat yang berfokus pada solusi, pembelajar lambat, kesulitan belajar, pendidikan inklusif, konseling kelompok

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INTRODUCTION

Children with slow learning abilities (slow learners) are students who tend to experience greater difficulty understanding subject matter than their peers. Physically and emotionally, slow learners did not show a significant difference compared with children with normal development (Kaznowski, 2004). This condition often goes undetected in early childhood and is recognized only by teachers and parents when children enter formal schooling. At this stage, academic demands increase, making differences in learning ability more visible, especially when the child is a slow learner and has difficulty following complex learning processes (Cooter, 2004).

In general, children who are slow learners have below-average intelligence levels, although there are no IQ cutoffs that definitively distinguish this group. However, they remain within the intelligence range and do not fall into the category of disabled (Tewari, 2018). Children with these characteristics tend to take longer and require repetition to understand academic concepts. This increases their risk of missing classes and experiencing academic failure (Nurfadhillah et al., 2022).

Learning difficulties experienced by children who are slow learners can be interpreted as an inability to complete learning tasks given by teachers. This difficulty is not only academic but can also be caused by psychological, sociological, and physiological factors that interact, resulting in low learning outcomes (Nuraeni & Syihabuddin, 2020). This condition requires special attention in the implementation of education, including the design of adaptive learning strategies and interventions that suit their needs.

Learning difficulties are an imbalance in mental abilities; anyone with learning difficulties may perform normally in school subjects (Zidan, 2023). Children with learning difficulties, including slow learners, often receive negative labeling from the environment, such as being labeled "stupid," "lazy," or "failing" because they are slow to master basic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic (Idris, 2009). Such labeling not only has an academic impact but also provides deep psychological pressure, which can ultimately lower children's confidence. The child becomes more focused on the stigma attached to them than on developing their potential (Rozak et al., 2016).

Based on basic education data in Indonesia (2023), in 2022, 40,928 schools implemented inclusive education at the elementary, junior high, high, and vocational high school levels, both public and private. The school has accommodated 135,946 students with special needs. In Magetan Regency, East Java, Indonesia, there are 43 inclusive elementary schools with a total of 474 students with special needs and various types of disorders. Slow learners usually have low learning achievement and take longer to understand the material. The study results (Sakiinatullaila et al., 2020) show that, at one of the schools in Yogyakarta that has implemented inclusive education, many students experience learning difficulties, including slow learners.

A supportive learning environment has an important role in fostering children's interest in learning. However, internal factors, such as motivation, also play a crucial role in helping children address learning problems (Asriyanti & Purwati, 2020). Based on the observations, the factors that cause children to be slow learners and experience learning difficulties include negative beliefs about one's abilities, pressure from parents to excel, and a lack of social support from peers. These things not only hinder the learning process but also worsen the psychological condition of children, so they require appropriate and systematic intervention.

In the context of education, guidance and counseling teachers have a strategic role in providing services that are able to help children, slow learners, overcome their learning barriers. One effective counseling approach for addressing children's psychological and academic problems is solution-based counseling (solution-focused brief counseling). This approach focuses on conversation solutions (Talk Solution), not on the discussion of the problem (problem talk), so that counseling is directed to find solutions constructively and empower the potential in him (Saputra, 2019). The study results (Fajriani & Yulizar, 2020) show that the SFBC approach effectively increased the motivation of dyslexic students. In addition, research by Rahma & Rosita (2024) reports that many counseling techniques can help students with learning difficulties, including cognitive group counseling, reality counseling, and SFBC counseling.

Solution-based counseling emphasizes individuals' strengths, potential, and ability to improve their lives and overcome challenges. This approach holds that every individual, including children who are slow learners, has the capacity to formulate goals and solve problems independently (Wijayanti, 2020). In practice, counselors provide stimuli through attractive media so that children feel comfortable expressing their expectations and the solutions they want to achieve. One common technique is a "magic question" that helps children formulate specific, detailed goals to guide their search for appropriate solutions (Wijayanti, 2020).

The goal of solution-based counseling is to change the way children see slow learners against the weaknesses they face, develop a positive mindset that focuses on strengths, and encourage them to make constructive changes (Andrianti et al., 2023). The purpose of this study is to help slow-learning students see objectively rather than focus only on their shortcomings. The novelty of this research lies in the integration of solution-based counseling approaches with efforts to overcome learning difficulties in slow learners' children, which has not been widely done to overcome learning problems in Indonesia, which is expected to make a real contribution in the field of guidance and counseling and expand the scope of inclusive education services.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with an experimental design. Experimental research was chosen to measure the effectiveness of the treatment or intervention administered to the research subjects in a controlled, systematic manner. The main objective of this experiment was to determine whether group counseling services using the Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) approach were effective in addressing the learning difficulties of slow learners.

The design used in this study is a Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design. In this design, the research subjects were divided into two groups, namely the experimental group and the control group, which were randomly selected (Random) (Creswell, 2016). Both groups were given a pretest to assess their initial level of learning difficulties before receiving treatment. After that, only the experimental group was given treatment in the form of group counseling services with the SFBC approach, while the control group was not given treatment. After the treatment was completed, both groups were given a posttest to assess the changes and effectiveness of the treatment.

The subjects in this study are students who are identified as slow learners at State Junior High School 4 Magetan. Subjects were selected based on the results of identifying guidance and counseling teachers, classroom teachers, and direct observation of student learning behavior. The sampling technique used was purposive

sampling, targeting students who have difficulties with academic learning and exhibit characteristics of slow learners.

Data in this study were collected through several techniques, namely the learning difficulty scale for slow-learning students, administered as pre- and posttests to measure the effectiveness of the treatment. Indicators of the learning difficulty scale in slow learners include: confidence problems, concentration problems, problems understanding the material, and problems with future consultation. Observation, to record students' behavior and responses during the group counseling process. Documentation, to record the implementation of counseling activities systematically. Interviews were conducted, limited to exploring supporting information from teachers and students.

The experimental group will receive group counseling services using the SFBC approach, delivered over 8 meetings over 2 months. Each counseling session will be focused on building students' self-strengths, formulating goals, exploring solutions, and encouraging positive change in their learning process.

The data from the pretest and posttest will be analyzed using a parametric statistical test, namely ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance). Uji ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) to compare the average of several groups of dependent (bound) variables, while controlling for the influence of one or more covariate variables (continuous independent variables) (Scott, 2019). Uji ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance) will determine whether there is a significant effect of solution-based counseling services on the reduction of learning difficulties in slow learners.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The study results show that the use of solution-based counseling positively affects the development of learning difficulties among slow learners in inclusive schools. The research subjects consisted of 8 (eight) students with learning disabilities in inclusive schools. The counseling process consists of eight sessions that focus on strengths, past successes, and the achievement of realistic, small goals.

Some of the main findings in this study are improvements in children's self-understanding of their personal strengths after the 3rd session. They begin to identify their strengths and connect them with appropriate learning strategies, leading to increased motivation and engagement, as shown by higher attendance, greater involvement in tasks, and greater enthusiasm while learning. This became apparent in the 4th session and continued through the 6th session. Providing coping strategies for learning difficulties. Children also begin to find alternative solutions when experiencing learning difficulties, such as asking friends for help, repeating lessons, or asking teachers to explain in a different way. In addition, providing social support is very important because involving guidance and counseling teachers and parents as supporters in the counseling process strengthens the achievement of goals.

Based on the analysis results, there is a change in the initial condition of learning difficulties for slow learners, characterized by an increase in their learning difficulty scale score, both overall and for each indicator. The increase in learning difficulties of slow learners between the initial and final conditions can be seen in the following table:

Table 1.

Change in learning difficulties of slow learners between pretest and post-test

No.	Research Sample	Group	Pre test	Post test
1.	A	Experiments	51	34
2.	B	Experiments	49	30
3.	C	Experiments	47	33
4.	D	Experiments	52	36
5.	F	Control	49	45
6.	G	Control	47	43
7.	H	Control	49	44
8.	I	Control	49	44

To make it easier to see changes in the initial and final conditions of learning difficulties of slow learners in the experimental group and control group, you can see the following graph:

Based on the ANCOVA results, the goal of solution-based counseling for slow learners facing learning difficulties in inclusive schools has been achieved, as evidenced by changes in pretest and posttest scores on learning difficulties. To demonstrate the existence of a change or improvement, it is necessary to conduct an ANCOVA. Data processing is carried out using SPSS. The results can be seen in the table as follows:

Table 2.

ANCOVA Test Calculation Through SPSS

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Itself.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	239.579a	2	119.790	48.712	.001	.951
Intercept	.164	1	.164	.067	.807	.013
pretest	8.454	1	8.454	3.438	.123	.407
group	229.333	1	229.333	93.257	.000	.949
Error	12.296	5	2.459			
Total	12187.000	8				
Corrected Total	251.875	7				

a. R Squared = ,951 (Adjusted R Squared = ,932)

Based on the results of the analysis above, the results of the group sig score of $0.000 < 0.05$ were obtained. This is based on H_a 's acceptance that group counseling services using SFBC techniques are effective in reducing learning difficulties among slow-learning students.

Table 3.
 Estimated Marginal Means of Posttest Scores by Group

Dependent Variable: posttest				
Group	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Experiments	32.819a	.818	30.716	34.921
control	44.431a	.818	42.329	46.534

Based on Table 3, the mean value of the experimental group was 32,819, and the mean of the control group was 44,431. This shows a decrease in the number of students with learning difficulties among those who receive group counseling using SFBC techniques, compared with students who do not receive these services.

Discussion

Based on the effectiveness test results, the post-test score of the experimental group is higher than that of the control group. This means that solution-based counseling for slow learners is effective in addressing learning difficulties in inclusive schools. The goal of counseling will be set by counselors, and they already have resources available to bring about change (Lightfoot, 2014). In addition, according to (Macdonald, 2007), Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) is to overcome difficulties by focusing on the potential and strengths of the student. The SFBC approach emphasizes students' active participation in problem-solving and in discussions that lead to potential solutions, rather than focusing solely on the problem itself (Holland, 2022).

The results of this study confirm that the solution-based counseling approach is effective in helping children who are slow learners, facing learning difficulties in inclusive schools, according to research indicators: confidence problems, concentration problems, difficulties understanding the material, and future concentration problems. This approach does not focus on problems or obstacles, but rather on the strengths and potential of children. The SFBC approach aligns with the characteristics of slow learners, who tend to have low self-esteem due to academic failure. By identifying small successes, counselors help build a child's confidence and expectations for learning progress (Jahara & Nurussakinah, 2023).

Research results Jamie et al (2011) SFBC intervention was effective in solving problems of material comprehension in mathematics lessons, but the change in comprehension did not change significantly. Overcoming the challenge of understanding material for slow-learning students requires cooperation among subject teachers, parents, and school counselors.

According to Connel (Rahman et al, 2025), the application of SFBC in educational settings, especially the implementation of counseling services in schools, is very suitable for school counselors because it can help students to focus more on their strengths, potentials, and resources as solutions to problems or disadvantaged situations that they are facing. In addition, the results of the research (Brogan et al., 2020) SFBC is effective for boosting self-esteem in Latino ethnic students. Students with good self-esteem will be better able to achieve their academic goals.

Research conducted Naraswari & Suranata et al (2021) in their literature review on SFBC in the educational environment. The study results show that SFBC has been applied in several countries to address academic problems. The results of the research conducted by Nugroho, A. R., Guswantoro, T., Gunawan, R., Lumbantobing, S. S., & Murniarti, (2021) shows the SFBC approach can improve students' self-esteem. In addition, the findings (Newsome, 2004) Solution-focused counseling is effective when done in a group format. Researchers have shown that SFBC is effective in improving students' academic achievement and attendance.

These findings align with previous research by de Shazer (Seligman, 2006) and Gingerich & Eisengart (2000), who emphasize the importance of focusing on solutions rather than problems as the basis for behavior change. In addition, this counseling helps children develop a growth mindset, the belief that abilities can be improved through effort and strategy. In the context of inclusive schools, this approach is relevant because 1) it appreciates the diversity of students' abilities, 2) it encourages collaboration between teachers, counselors, and parents, and 3) it provides space for focused individualized interventions. However, the limited session time and the lack of consistent support from the child's environment are challenges that need to be considered in long-term implementation.

CONCLUSION

Based on ANCOVA results, group counseling services using the Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) approach have been shown to be significantly effective in overcoming learning difficulties among slow learners in inclusive schools. The significant difference between the experimental and control groups was indicated by a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) for the group variable. The Estimated Marginal Means post-test score after the control effect of the pretest for the experimental group was 32,819, while the control group reached 44,431. A Partial Eta-Squared value of 0.949 indicates that counseling interventions account for a very large proportion of the variance in post-test results. These findings confirm that the strengths-based approach in SFBC empirically improved participants' confidence, concentration, and academic understanding. Thus, this study provides strong quantitative evidence that SFBC is a valid intervention model that supports the academic success of students with learning difficulties in inclusive education settings.

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